



**THE ARCHITECTS' JOURNAL**

# Khan wants protected views rethink after St Paul's row

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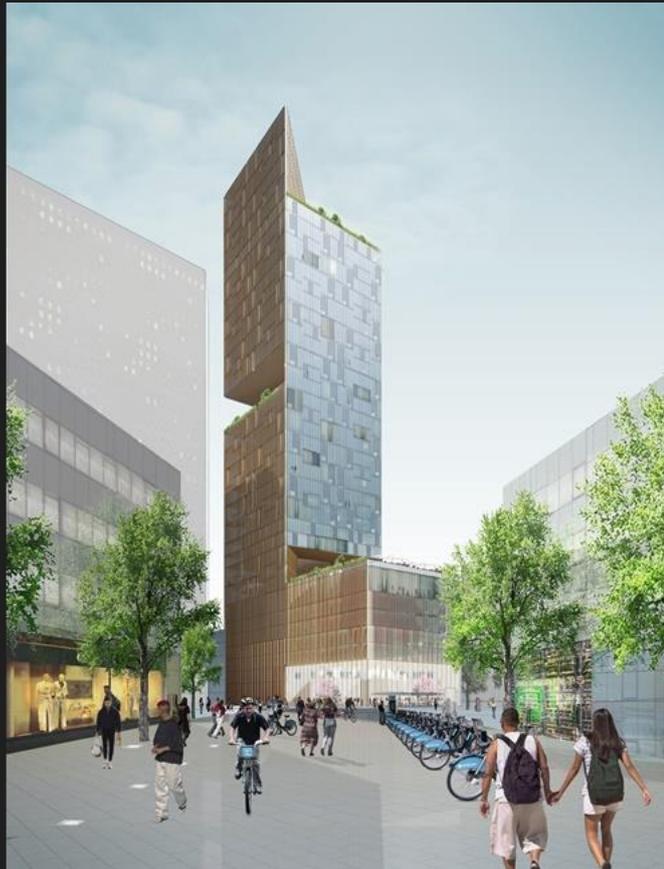
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London mayor Sadiq Khan has said 'more distant boroughs' should be included in protected views of St Paul's Cathedral, following complaints that a **42-storey tower designed by SOM** has breached planning rules and 'destroyed' a historic vista

Khan made the comments at the **Mayor's Question Time** yesterday, where the issue was raised following criticism from conservation charity the Friends of Richmond Park.

As the AJ revealed last month, **the group previously wrote to the mayor to voice its outrage** that the 'cherished' protected view from the park's King Henry's Mound to St Paul's – a view that has existed for 300 years – had been severely damaged by the SOM-designed Manhattan Loft Gardens tower in Stratford, currently being built.

At the meeting, Khan said that, while the skyscraper was visible under certain conditions from King Henry's Mound, it did not 'fall within any of the areas where specific additional consultation was or is required in order to safeguard the view of St Paul's cathedral from this point'.

He added: 'Specifically, this view was first identified and given planning status in 1991 and, although the strategic view management framework which regulates this view has changed seven times since then, it appears no one ever anticipated a building so far away from Richmond – and more than 7km behind the dome of St Paul's – might be visible in that way.'

'Going forward, consideration is to be given to including more distant boroughs in the list that must undertake further consultation to prevent this happening again. However this would currently need government agreement unless the necessary powers are delegated to the mayor, as has been sought.'

The UK's statutory adviser on heritage, Historic England, has said it was not consulted on the Manhattan Loft Gardens building and would have 'objected strongly' if it had it been. Amid an ongoing consultation by the mayor on a new London Plan – the capital's overarching planning document, which includes protected views of key landmarks – the organisation also reiterated calls for a 'pan-London tall buildings strategy' including a 3D digital model to allow proposals to be properly tested prior to construction. This was also one of the five key demands of the AJ's and *Observer* newspaper's **Skyline Campaign** in 2014.

Historic England's London planning director, Emily Gee, said: 'It is now essential that the GLA openly acknowledges that this tower is a mistake and should not ever be treated as a precedent.'

'The building spoils the view of St Paul's Cathedral from Richmond Park, which is a protected view. Protected views of St Paul's are a hugely important feature in planning guidelines for London. London's tall buildings tend to come in clusters. A

tower that spoils a 300-year-old view must not set an unwanted precedent and invite a cluster.'

Within the London Plan, the London View Management Framework (LVMF) states that any development in the background of this view 'is subordinate to the cathedral and that the clear sky background profile of the upper part of the dome remains'.

However, photographs released by the Friends of Richmond Park and taken with a telephoto lens showed the emerging skyscraper in Stratford clearly visible behind Christopher Wren's landmark. The Friends of Richmond Park says this has substantially compromised the profile of the building and has 'obliterated' the clear sky background.

In addition, the group has created a [petition](#) calling for the construction of Manhattan Loft Gardens to be temporarily halted to allow an investigation into how it was granted permission in light of its impact on the historic views, which has received more than 8,000 signatures.

The London Plan is currently out to informal consultation until the end of this month with a view to the final version of a new plan being published in autumn 2019.